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Interrelated and interacting rhetorical dimensions which influence the outcome and effectiveness of a communication can be identified. Interpersonal dimensions include (1) the degree of liking among persons involved in the rhetorical act, (2) power in the form of charisma or a power structure, and (3) distance, either interpersonal or social, which separates those involved. Attitudinal dimensions involve those predispositions which affect the response to a rhetorical situation, including attitudes toward the central idea of a communication and the ideological variables evoked by the rhetorical act--(1) unconscious assumptions, (2) the norms and values of listeners or readers, (3) ethical attitudes, and (4) philosophic presuppositions about the nature of man. Finally, the rhetorical act is influenced by such situational dimensions as (1) the format, (2) the channels employed in the communication, (3) the number and types of people involved, and the degree to which they are organized, (4) the functions of the communication, (5) the method of communication employed, and (6) the contexts of time and place. (DL)

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DIMENSIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF RHETORIC

Wayne E. Brockriede

DURING recent years a state of cold war has existed in the field of speech. Humanists who seek to understand rhetoric primarily through the use of historical scholarship and behavioral scientists who seek to develop a communication theory primarily through empirical description and experimental research have tended to see one another as threatening enemies. Yet members of these factions have the common objective of studying similar phenomena. The student of communication who conceives his study as focusing on pragmatic interaction of people and ideas is concerned with the rhetorical impulse within communication events.[1]

The purpose of this essay is to sketch the beginning and to encourage the further development of a system of dimensions for the study of rhetorical communication. Five assumptions implicit in this attempt should be stated explicitly from the outset.

First, the conception of rhetoric broadly as the study of how interpersonal relationships and attitudes are influenced within a situational context assumes the presence of the rhetorical impulse in such diverse acts as a speaker addressing an audience face to face or through mass media, a group of people conferring or conversing, a writer creating a drama or a letter to an editor, or a government or some other institution projecting an image.

Second, the concept of rhetoric must grow empirically from an observation and analysis of contemporary, as well as past, events.[2] The dimensions should be selected, developed, structured, and continuously revised to help explain and evaluate particular rhetorical acts.

Third, although the theorist, critic, or practitioner may focus his attention on a rhetorical act, such an act must be viewed as occurring within a matrix of interrelated contexts, campaigns, and processes.

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1 Although my treatment differs from Dean C. Barnlund's excellent analysis in his "Toward a Meaning-Centered Philosophy of Communication," *Journal of Communication,* XII (December 1962), 197-211, the scope of my conception of rhetoric seems similar to the scope of his conception of communication. Gerald R. Miller in his *Speech Communication: A Behavioral Approach* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1966), makes explicit (p. 12) his synonymous usage of the terms rhetoric and speech communication.

2 An argument which supports this claim is developed in my essay "Toward a Contemporary Aristotelian Theory of Rhetoric," *QJS,* LII (February 1966), 35-37.

Fourth, the rubrics of a rhetorical act are best viewed as dimensional, each reflecting a wide range of possible descriptions and not as expressing dichotomies.

Fifth, the dimensions of rhetoric are interrelational: each dimension bears a relationship to every other dimension.

This essay, therefore, represents an attempt to sketch a contemporary concept of interrelated interpersonal, attitudinal, and situational dimensions of a broadly conceived rhetorical act.

I

Traditional rhetoric places much less emphasis on interpersonal relationships than does the model presented in this paper. Even the concept of *ethos* frequently has been conceived as personal proof functioning rationalistically as a message variable.[3]

What are here developed as interpersonal dimensions may indeed function in an instrumental way, having some influence on a rhetorical act which aims primarily at attitudinal influence or situational appropriateness. But interpersonal dimensions themselves often represent the principal goals; and the establishment, change, or reinforcement of such interpersonal relationships as liking, power, and distance may exercise a controlling influence on the other dimensions.

Liking. This interpersonal dimension poses the question: how attracted to one another are the people who participate in a rhetorical act? Liking differs qualitatively and may refer to such continua as spiritual adoration—hate, sexual attraction — repulsion, friendship — enmity, and compatibility—incompatibility. In a dyadic act the feelings may or may not be mutual. When many people are involved—as in hearing a public address, participating in a discussion, or reading a best-seller, a single relationship may be characteristic—as when an audience becomes polarized, or relationships may vary—as when some discussants feel affection for a leader whereas others are repelled. Liking also differs in degree of intensity and in degree of susceptibility to change.

The change or reinforcement of the liking dimension may function as the primary purpose of a rhetorical act; courtship, for example, aims principally at affecting this relationship. Or increasing, maintaining, or decreasing the degree people like one another may be a by-product of a situation which has other chief aims. Or the liking relationship, though it remains essentially unchanged during a rhetorical act, may have a profound influence on whether other dimensions vary, as well as on how they vary.[4]

Power. Power may be defined as the capacity to exert interpersonal influence. Power may be the ultimate purpose or function, as in a power struggle, or it may be a by-product of or an influence on the controlling dimensions. The power dimension includes two primary variables.

First, what are the kinds of power? One is the influence a person has because others like him. The word *charis-*

[3] For example, in Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird's *Speech Criticism* (New York, 1948), the chapter on *ethos* (pp. 383-391) is subtitled "ethical proof in discourse."

[4] Hugh D. Duncan stresses this dimension in his *Communication and Social Order* (New York, 1962) when he says (p. 170) that "the study of *how men court each other* . . . will tell us much about the function of rhetoric in society." See also Kenneth Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* in *A Grammar of Motives and a Rhetoric of Motives* (Cleveland, 1962), pp. 732-736. I make no attempt in this essay to catalogue the status of knowledge or to supply bibliographies concerning each of the dimensions discussed. I shall suggest, however, a source or two which will develop further each of the dimensions considered in this essay.

ma denotes this kind of power when it reaches a great magnitude. But personal magnetism exists also in lesser degrees. The power of personal attractiveness represents a kind of intersection of liking and power. A second type of power stems from position or role in the social system. By having control over the assignment of sanctions, the allocation of rewards and punishments in a social system, a man merely by virtue of his office or role may be powerful. A third type is the control over the communication channels and other elements of the rhetorical situation. This situational power corresponds to what some people call the gatekeeper function. A fourth kind of power is an influence over the sources of information, the norms and attitudes, and the ideology. Such an influence seems to depend on the extent to which other people trust one's ideational competence generally and his special expertise on matters relevant to the rhetorical act, on their perceptions of his general willingness to express himself honestly and accurately and of his special candor on the particular relevant topics, and on their feelings of confidence in their abilities to predict accurately the meaning and significance attached to his statements and actions.[5] Finally, one exercises indirectly a degree of power by having access to and influence on other people who can exercise the other kinds of power more directly. So a first general variable of the power dimension is the degree with which people participating in a rhetorical act can manifest these kinds of power.

A second variable is power structure. Knowing how much power of what kind each rhetorical participant has may be less immediately relevant than knowing the relationship among the power statuses of the people involved. That is, power is relative rather than absolute. The significance of the power of a writer, for example, regardless of the amount or kind he may possess, depends on how much power he has relative to that of his readers. Two questions especially are important in an analysis of the power structure. How disparate are the power positions of the various participants of an act, and does the act function to increase, maintain, or decrease the disparity? How rigid or flexible is the structure, and does the rhetorical act function to increase, maintain, or decrease the stability?[6]

Distance. The concept of distance is related to the other interpersonal dimensions. One generally feels "closer" to those persons he likes and "farther" from those he dislikes, but the greater the power disparity the greater the distance. Like all other dimensions, the establishment of an appropriate distance (whether decreasing, maintaining, or increasing it) may be a rhetorical act's primary function, an incidental outcome, or an influencing factor.

Two kinds of distance make up this dimension. One is an interpersonal distance between each two participants in a rhetorical act. The other is a social

5 Kenneth Andersen and Theodore Clevenger, Jr., provide an excellent synthesis of information on this kind of power in "A Summary of Experimental Research in Ethos," *Speech Monographs*, XXX (June 1963), 59-78.

6 This dimension seems to have been ignored in the study of many rhetorical situations. It is only implied, partially, for example, in the public address doctrine of *ethos*. During recent years, however, under the headings of leadership and power structure, many small group specialists have emphasized it. See, for example, Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, Ill., 1960), pp. 487-800. Among a number of useful works in the field of political sociology which are relevant to an understanding of the function of power in rhetorical acts, see *Class, Status, and Power*, ed. Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), pp. 201-352.

distance which exists within the structure of the group or groups within or related to the rhetorical act—such groups as audiences, committees, organizations, societies, and cultures. Although interpersonal and group distance are related closely and tend generally to covary, they are discrete variables in that two persons in a discussion group, for example, may move more closely together while the group structure is in the process of disintegrating.[7]

Several questions about the role of interpersonal and group distance in rhetorical situations seem important. How much distance (of each type) is optimal in achieving certain kinds of interpersonal, attitudinal, and situational rhetorical functions? What conditions of the other dimensions are most likely to increase, maintain, or decrease the distance (of each type)?

2

Controversial ideas which involve a choice among competing judgments, attitudes, and actions form a necessary part of any rhetorical act. Very often, although not always, such a choice is the primary operation, and the various interpersonal and situational dimensions merely create the environment in which the choice is made and influence how the choice is made. Traditionally, rhetoric seems rather consistently to have made this sort of assumption. The principal function of some rhetorical acts is interpersonal interaction or situational appropriateness, however, and the influence on attitudes in the making of choices is secondary. Attitude may be defined as the predisposition for preferential response to a situation. Two kinds of attitudes have rhetorical significance: attitudes toward the central idea in a choice-making situation and the ideological structure of other related attitudes and beliefs.

Central Idea. Several features of attitudes toward the central idea of a rhetorical situation require study.

First, although attitudes customarily have been considered as a point on a scale, this view is inadequate. As Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, and Roger E. Nebergall have pointed out, a person's attitude may be described more accurately by placing various alternative positions on a controversy within three latitudes—of acceptance, of rejection, and of non-commitment.[8] On the policy of the United States toward Vietnam, for example, a person may have one favored position but place other positions within his latitude of acceptance; such additional positions are tolerable. He may have one position that he rejects more strongly than any other but place other positions within his latitude of rejection. Finally, because he lacks information, interest, or decisiveness, he may place other positions within his latitude of non-commitment. To understand or predict the attitudinal interaction in a rhetorical situation one must know whether its central idea falls within the partici-

7 One of the shortcomings of the concept of interpersonal distance is that the term is not readily operationalized into specifiable behaviors. Consciously or unconsciously, however, people seem to have a sense of closeness or distance from others; such a feeling can influence rhetorical interaction. The philosophical basis for Kenneth Burke's rhetoric is the view that men are fundamentally divided. His concepts of identification and consubstantiality suggest that one of rhetoric's functions is to reduce man's interpersonal distance from man. See, for example, Burke, pp. 543-51. Edward T. Hall treats distance literally as a variable in communication situations in his *Silent Language* (Garden City, N. Y., 1959), pp. 187-209. The concept of social distance is implied in such terms in small group research as group cohesiveness, primary groups, and reference groups.

8 *Attitude and Attitude Change: The Social Judgment-Ego Involvement Approach* (Philadelphia, 1965), pp. 18-26.

pants' latitude of acceptance, rejection, or non-commitment.

Second, the degree of interest and the intensity of feeling with which the central idea confronted in a rhetorical act occupies a place in whatever latitude will influence potentially all other dimensions of that act.

Third, the way the various latitudes are structured is an influential variable. Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall identify one such structure which they term ego-involvement. A person who is ego-involved in a given attitude tends to perceive relatively few discrete alternative positions, to have a narrow latitude of acceptance—sometimes accepting only one position, to have a broad latitude of rejection—lumping most positions as similarly intolerable, and to have little or no latitude of non-commitment.[9] The ego-involved hawk, for example, may accept only a strong determination to achieve a military victory, assimilating all positions close to that one; and he may reject all other stands, seeing little difference between unilateral withdrawal and attempts to negotiate that necessitate any genuine concessions to the adversary, and labeling anything less than total victory as appeasement.

Fourth, a person's persuasibility on the central idea of a rhetorical act is a relevant variable. How likely is a person to respond positively to attempts to change his attitude? This question suggests the superiority of the Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall analysis. The question is not the simple one of how likely is a person to move from "yes" to "no" or from favoring a negotiated settlement in Vietnam which does not involve the possibility of a coalition government in South Vietnam to one which does. It is the far more complex question of whether positions which are now assigned to one latitude can be moved to another one. This concept recognizes, for example, that to move a person from a position of rejection to one of non-commitment is significant persuasion. A person's persuasibility is related, of course, to the nature, intensity, and structure of his attitude.[10] An ego-involved person who feels strongly about an idea is less likely to change his attitude than one who is less ego-involved or less intense.

What the preceding discussion suggests is that the nature, intensity, structure, or persuasibility of the attitude of any participant toward the central idea in a rhetorical transaction will influence the other dimensions and be influenced by them. In addition, the relationship of the attitudes of each participant to those of others in the situation will influence their interaction together. The issue here can be focused in a single question: how similar are the people in a rhetorical act with respect to the nature, intensity, structure, and changeability of their attitudes toward the idea under focus in the rhetorical act? Or, to put the question in a slightly different way: to what extent can people identify with the attitudes of one another?[11]

Ideology. An attitude does not exist in a vacuum. One idea does not occur by itself. Rather, attitudes have homes in ideologies. The ideologies evoked in a rhetorical act influence, and may sometimes dominate, the other dimensions.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

10 In addition, an individual's personality may be one of the determinants of his persuasibility on controversial propositions. See Irving L. Janis, Carl I. Hovland, *et al.*, *Personality and Persuasibility* (New Haven, Conn., 1959), and Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind* (New York, 1960).

11 Kenneth Burke's concept of identification seems to relate to the attitude dimension as well as to the dimension of interpersonal distance.

Several ideological structures may be identified. Attitudes may relate to other attitudes, to systems of values and norms, to ethical codes, and to philosophic presuppositions about the nature of man, the nature of reality, the nature of language, and the nature of knowledge. About each of these contexts two questions may be raised: What is the nature of the ideological structures of each participant in the act? How similar or different are the ideologies of the various participants?

The central idea of any rhetorical transaction evokes not only attitudes toward that idea but attitudes toward related ideas. In recent years several theories and approaches have developed: balance theory, the theory of cognitive dissonance, the congruity hypothesis, and the social judgment approach.[12] Although these formulations differ and the differences are argued heatedly, one principle seems accepted by most attitude theorists: man has an urge to think himself consistent, to try to achieve homeostasis within his system of attitudes.

Although relatively few persons work out a careful formulation of an ideology which consciously monitors various attitudes, each person very likely has an implicit ideology which unconsciously affects the development of any attitude in the system. Anyone attempting to change one attitude of a person, therefore, will profit from the admittedly difficult task of identifying that person's other attitudes and of considering how they may facilitate or retard such an attempt and how the target-attitude will, if changed, affect other attitudes. In addition, to understand the rhetorical interaction on some central idea one must also consider how similar or different one person's attitudes toward related ideas are to those of other people in the rhetorical act.

A second ideological variable is the system of values and norms subscribed to by the people in a rhetorical act. Just as a person's attitudes relate to his other attitudes, they relate also to more fundamental principles which he values. Whereas the first relationship may be viewed as a sort of part-to-part analogical inference, the second is a part-to-whole (or whole-to-part) inference. General values both evolve from many particular attitudes, and they also structure new experience in the development of new attitudes toward new situations.[13]

One of the most important sources of each person's fundamental values is his membership in small groups, organizations, societies, and cultures. The argument can be made that all values can be traced generally to a social origin, but some values especially can be associated closely with membership in a particular reference group—whether small group, organization, society, or culture. Such shared values are termed norms. When a rhetorical situation involves the actual or implied presence of such groups, the norms of those groups predictably are going to function as an ideology which will tend to

12 See Fritz Heider, "Attitudes and Cognitive Organizations," *Journal of Psychology*, XVI (April 1946), 107-114; Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, Ill., 1958); Charles E. Osgood, Percy Tannenbaum, and George Suci, *The Measurement of Meaning* (Urbana, Ill., 1957); and Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall.

13 In their essay "The American Value System: Premises for Persuasion," *Western Speech*, XXVI (Spring 1962), 83-91, Edward D. Steele and W. Charles Redding state, "Values, as they exist psychologically in the mind of the audience, have been generalized from the total experience of the culture and 'internalized' into the individual personalities of the listeners as guides to the right way to believe or act" (p. 84). Karl R. Wallace argues that general value premises function as the *substance* of rhetoric—as good reasons which support propositions or value judgments. See "The Substance of Rhet-

set limits for attitudes of group members.[14]

A third kind of ideology is the ethical variable which raises two questions: What personal morality or public ethic guides the interaction of attitudes? Is the code of conduct acceptable to others who participate in the rhetorical act? A transaction of ideas viewed as unethical by someone with whom a person tries to interact will have adverse effects on many of the other dimensions.[15]

A fourth ideological variable consists of a person's philosophic presuppositions about the nature of man, the nature of reality, the nature of language, and the nature of knowledge. This variable probably functions relatively rarely as the primary goal of a rhetorical act, perhaps only when philosophers engage in dialogue, but it establishes a frame of reference within which attitudes interact. Is a man an object to be manipulated or a decision-maker in the process of making radical choices? To what extent does he behave rationally? To what extent is his rhetorical behavior determined for him and to what extent does he exercise free will? Does one take an Aristotelian, a Platonic, or a phenomenalistic stance on the question of the nature of reality? How does man acquire knowledge? To what extent does he come to know through *a priori* intellection, through revelation, through intuition, through memory, through empirical observation, through existential experience, or through scientific analysis?[16] How each person in a rhetorical act answers these questions, and the degree to which the various answers are similar, will influence how attitudes interact.

3

A rhetorical act occurs only within a situation, and the nature of that act is influenced profoundly by the nature of the encompassing situation. Furthermore, on certain ceremonial occasions situational dimensions dominate the act. A speaker's function in a funeral oration, for example, may be merely to meet the expectations of the occasion. Six situational dimensions form a part of the conceptual framework advanced in this essay: format, channels, people, functions, method, and contexts.

Format. The essential concern of this dimension is how procedures, norms, and conventions operate to determine who speaks and who listens.

Formats fall into two general types which anchor the ends of the dimension. At one extreme is a polarized situation in which one person functions as speaker or writer and others function as listeners or readers. At the other extreme is a type of conference situation in which the functions of the various participants rotate freely between speaking and listening.

Formats vary with respect to the degree of flexibility permitted rhetorical participants. In some situations, for example in written and electronic discourse, a rhetorician has little opportunity to revise his original plans within the act, although he may utilize feedback in designing subsequent acts in a campaign. In other situations a rhet-

oric: Good Reasons," *QJS*, XLIX (October 1963), 239-249.

14 See A. Paul Hare, *Handbook for Small Research* (New York, 1962), pp. 23-61.

15 Edward Rogge, in his "Evaluating the Ethics of a Speaker in a Democracy," *QJS*, XLV (December 1959), 419-425, suggests that the standards used to evaluate a speaker's ethics be those established by the audience and the society of which it is a part.

16 The importance of the philosophic dimension of rhetoric is well argued by Otis M. Walter in "On Views of Rhetoric, Whether Conservative or Progressive," *QJS*, XLIX (December 1963), 367-382.

orician has maximum opportunity to observe the reactions of others and to make appropriate decisions accordingly.[17]

Channels. The role of channels in a rhetorical act is manifested in three variables. First, is the communication conveyed verbally, nonverbally, or through a mixture of the two modes? Radio speaking and written messages are instances of the verbal channel; a silent vigil and pictures employ the nonverbal channel; and face-to-face speaking, television, and books which feature graphic materials illustrate the mixed mode.[18]

Second, if language is employed, is it in oral or written form? Although the distinction between these two channels needs no clarification,[19] their modes of transmission require analysis. Traditional rhetoric has long studied delivery as one of the canons. Although students of written composition have paid far less attention to the study of transmitting messages, such features as the selection of paper, binding, cryptology, and the like may influence the interaction between writer and reader more than the persons playing either role recognize. Delivery, whether in oral or written channel, illustrates well the primary idea of this essay: that each dimension relates to every other dimension. Delivery will influence and be influenced by the interpersonal dimensions of liking, power, and distance; by the attitudes toward the central idea and toward those related to it; and by the other situational dimensions of format, people, functions, method, and contexts.

Third, is the rhetoric transmitted directly or indirectly? A direct channel is a system of communication in which one person relates to someone else without the interference or aid of a third person or a mechanical device. The oral interpretation act, the speaker who reaches the newspaper reader via a reporter, the tape recording, television, and the two-step flow of communication all illustrate the indirect channel.[20] But indirectness admits of degrees. Messages may be transmitted through only one intermediary person or agency, or they may follow a circuitous track, as in a typical rumor, between its originator and its ultimate, and perhaps indefinite, destination.[21]

People. How rhetorical situations are populated forms six variables. One concerns the number of interacting people. Are they few or many?[22]

A second variable is the number of groups which function in the situation, whether as audiences or conferences. The range is from one to many. A

17 See David K. Berlo, *The Process of Communication* (New York, 1960), pp. 111-116. Ironically, in public address, a format which offers considerable opportunity for communicative flexibility, the role of feedback has been analyzed very little.

18 Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage* (New York, 1967) is a notable attempt to make the nonverbal code as important in a book as the verbal.

19 Joseph A. DeVito's study of "Comprehension Factors in Oral and Written Discourse of Skilled Communicators," *Speech Monographs*, XXXII (June 1965), 124-128, concluded that written discourse involved a more difficult vocabulary, simpler sentences, and a greater density of ideas than did oral discourse.

20 The two-step flow of communication and the concept of opinion leadership has considerable applicability to rhetoric. See Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (Glencoe, Ill., 1955) and Elihu Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-to-Date Report on an Hypothesis," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XXI (Spring 1957), 61-78.

21 The classic study of rumor is Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman, *Psychology of Rumor* (New York, 1947).

22 I am inclined to include the intrapersonal communication of self-address within the scope of rhetoric. An individual's roles may interact intrapersonally and attitudinally in a variety of situational contexts in ways closely analogous to the interpersonal and attitudinal interaction of two or more persons. For support of this position, see Barnlund, 199-201, and Burke, pp. 561-563.

speaker may address one particular audience or many audiences, either simultaneously or consecutively. A person may participate in a conference which operates virtually as a self-contained unit or in a conference involving multiple groups.

A third variable has to do with the degree to which the people are organized. The range is from a virtual absence of organization to the status of a highly structured and cohesive reference group.

A fourth variable, closely related to the third, involves the degree of homogeneity among the participating people. They may exhibit a high degree of homogeneity, they may be similar on some and different on other properties, or they may differ so much as to constitute essentially different groups even though they participate in the same situation.[23]

Fifth, participants in a rhetorical situation may vary widely in their degree of awareness of their roles and in their degree of involvement in the situation.

Sixth, those who people a rhetorical situation engage in a range of relationships to that situation. One, some, many, or all of the participants may regard themselves or be regarded by others as depersonalized stimulus objects; as members or agents of a culture, institution, or group; as performing a role; as projecting an image; as manifesting a set of properties; or as selves with radical choices to make or commitments to uphold.

Functions. The functions of a rhetorical situation may be viewed from a general perspective or along interpersonal and attitudinal dimensions.

Some questions of situational function seem to apply both to the interpersonal and to the attitudinal aspects of a rhetorical act. To what extent are interpersonal relationships and/or attitudes to be reinforced or changed? What degrees of intensity of reinforcement or change does the situation call for? If change is to function, in what direction?

Other questions relate directly to the interpersonal dimension. Are people trying primarily to relate, identify, disengage, or in other ways to interact with others in the situation, or are they trying to express their "selves" conjointly? Are they trying to court, please, satisfy, tolerate, dissatisfy, or derogate one another? Are they trying to change or reinforce the power disparity or power structure of the situation? Are they trying to increase, maintain, or decrease social or interpersonal distance? Is group maintenance or group cohesiveness a relevant situational function?

Still other questions relate directly to three kinds of attitude influence. First, a person may present a message with a designative function—to present information, describe, define, amplify, clarify, make ambiguous, obfuscate, review, or synthesize ideas. Second, someone may present a message with an evaluative function—to praise, make commentary, hedge, criticize, or blame some person, object, situation, judgment, or policy. Third, someone may present a message with an advocative function—to solve a problem, create indecision, reinforce a present choice, foster delay, choose a change alternative, resolve a conflict, propose a compromise, or stimulate action.

The functions of rhetorical situations appear far more complex than implied by the traditional categories of inform, entertain, and persuade.

[23] The effect of a group's homogeneity and receptivity on the integration and polarization of an audience is admirably discussed in Charles H. Woolbert's pioneer monograph "The Audience," *Psychological Monographs,* XXI, No. 92 (June 1916), 37-54.

Method. Any situational function is manifested instrumentally through a number of message variables. These constitute the methodological dimension of the rhetorical act. Method is less often than other dimensions the ultimate function of the act; typically it plays the instrumental role of facilitating whatever dimension is primary.

Method includes the materials presented, the form in which they are structured, and the style in which materials and form are communicated.

Three questions about the material to be presented seem important. How much data should be presented? What kinds of data should be employed? From what sources should they be derived? These questions, of course, have no simple answers universally applicable.

The form variable may be analyzed in two ways. A distinction can be made between a sort of form-in-the-large which permeates the rhetorical method and a more microscopic set of structures which develop. The rhetorical act may be transacted through some conventional medium like an essay, a play, or a speech. A rhetorician may fulfill expectations by using identifiable forms in typical ways, or he may create new forms or employ old forms in new ways. Whether forms are appropriately new or old and whether their development is appropriately conventional or eccentric, of course, depends on the experience and expectations of the other people in the rhetorical act. The method may represent a straightforward management of materials to develop a central idea directly, or reflect an indirect ordering—for example, through the use of irony.[24] How prominent the form-in-the-large is to be is an important issue. Should the form become clearly evident in the discourse, or should it fulfill its function unobtrusively and not call any special attention to itself?

The form variable may also be viewed microscopically. This level of analysis includes a consideration of the logical connection between the material presented and the ideas advanced—which calls for the student of rhetoric to understand the logic of rhetorical interaction and the modes of reasoning appropriate to such interaction.[25] It includes a recognition of the structure which joins the ideas advanced into a pattern which amplifies or supports the central idea—which calls for an understanding of the patterns of expository and argumentative discourse, the analysis of a controversy into its issues, and the methods of problem-solving and negotiation.[26]

Specific formal structures may be recognizable immediately to others in the act and utilized in predictable ways, or they may be new and less obvious. Furthermore, the two levels of form in a discourse, the macroscopic and the microscopic, may function harmoniously toward the same end or constitute incongruity. Form, whether large or small, may be designed to facilitate information transfer or to disrupt it; to create a relatively narrow range of meanings

24 For an excellent analysis of rhetorical irony, see Allan B. Karstetter, "Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Irony," *Speech Monographs,* XXXI (June 1964), 162-178.

25 If one accepts the central idea of this essay that rhetoric is a system of interrelated dimensions, he must conclude that a rhetorical logic must accommodate the function of dimensions other than the one concerned with formal relationships among propositions. Irrelevant to rhetorical analysis is any logical system which assumes that man is only rational and that men do not vary, that ideas can be divorced from their affective content and from their ideological contexts, and that the only situation is that of the logician talking to the logician.

26 Rhetoricians have tended to treat these various organizational patterns, like logic, as invariant structures, without due regard for the totality of the rhetorical situation—its people, its functions, and its contexts.

and attitudinal responses or to maximize ambiguity; to present an optimal amount of material efficiently or to aim at redundancy; to achieve identification or alienation; to reinforce meanings and attitudes or to change them; and to increase or decrease the intensity of feelings toward the ideas.

Style, like form, may be viewed macroscopically or microscopically. Rhetorical style may be looked at from the point of view of broad symbolic strategy, a style-in-the-large. I take this concern to be behind much of the writing of Kenneth Burke.[27] Or it may be analyzed by looking at smaller units of analysis —at the level of the phoneme, word, sentence, or paragraph. Perhaps the writing of modern linguists may provide better ways of analyzing style microscopically than rhetoricians have followed traditionally.[28]

Many of the questions raised about form appear to apply also to style. Whether looked at large or small, style, too, provokes such issues as efficiency of information transfer, clarity *vs.* ambiguity, conciseness *vs.* redundancy, confidence *vs.* uncertainty, and identification *vs.* alienation. The issues can be resolved only by studying the particular interaction of the other dimensions in each unique rhetorical act.

Contexts. The contexts of time and place may alter in various ways how other dimensions function in the act. In this regard context is typical of situational dimensions. The substance of a rhetorical act is rarely located in the situation: it more characteristically focuses on the interpersonal and attitudinal categories. Aspects of the situation, including context, although not fundamental or ultimate, however, can alter decisively the other categories and hence change the substance of the act.

In addition, time functions in another way. Each rhetorical act has some larger setting and fits into one or more ongoing processes.[29] For example, a novel may be a part of a movement or of several movements, a representation of an ideology or several ideologies, a moment in the career of the writer, a specimen of some formal or stylistic tendency, a phase in some long-term interpersonal relationship with a set of readers, *et cetera*. Several questions may suggest some of the ways a rhetorical act may relate to its contexts. Does an act occur relatively early or relatively late in one or more processes? To what extent is the act congruous with its larger framework? Does the act play one role in one context and a different, and perhaps conflicting, role in another?

4

Important to the student of rhetoric is the question of points of view. A rhetorical act will be perceived quite differently by each person who participates in it, and still differently by each person who observes and criticizes it from "the outside." Here, as elsewhere, "meanings are in people," not in discourses. Students of rhetoric must try to determine how the various partici-

27 Burke, for example, says (p. 567) that rhetoric "is rooted in an essential function of language itself, . . . the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols." For Burke, rhetorical analysis is an attempt to unearth the essential linguistic strategies of the rhetorical agent.

28 In "A Linguistic Analysis of Oral and Written Style," *QJS*, XLVIII (December, 1962), 419-422, Jane Blankenship applied the system of analysis which Charles C. Fries described in his book *The Structure of English* (New York, 1952).

29 Two recent books which display a contextual orientation to rhetoric are Wallace Fotheringham, *Perspectives on Persuasion* (Boston, 1966) and Huber W. Ellingsworth and Theodore Clevenger, Jr., *Speech and Social Action* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967).

pants and observers have perceived the dimensions of the act and to discover the extent to which such perceptions differ. The points of view of the relevant people become part of an important dimension of the act.

The consideration of point of view may have different implications for theorists, as compared with participants and critics. The theorist tends to be interested in generalizations at the highest level of abstraction he can achieve, whereas participants and critics tend to be interested in making decisions or judgments about one very particular and unique act.

Perhaps the most important single characteristic of rhetoric is that it is a matrix of complex and interrelated variables of the kind discussed in this paper. The theorist cannot meaningfully pluck from the system any single variable and hope to understand it apart from the others. How can one understand style, for example, without knowing how it interrelates with power structure, with distance, with attitudes and ideologies, with the demands of format and context—in short, with every other dimension of the act? Gross generalizations about stylistic characteristics which ignore the assumption that style functions very differently when placed in different combinations with the other variables simply will not do. Unfortunately for the prognosis of theoretical advances in rhetoric, the combinations and permutations of the alternatives afforded by the various dimensions are so many as to approach infinity. But methods will have to be developed to pursue the sort of interrelational kind of analysis which an adequate theory of rhetoric requires.[30]

The practitioner may use such an interrelational analysis before, during, and after a transaction as a guide to the decisions he must make to give himself the best chance of interacting with others as he wishes.

The critic may profitably identify the single most compelling dimension of a rhetorical act under consideration and then investigate how that dimension interrelates with others which appear to be relevant. For example, a critic studying Nikita Khrushchev's interaction with the American public during his 1959 visit to this country might focus primary attention on Khrushchev's reduction of interpersonal distance between himself and his hosts in order to see how his distance-reducing rhetoric related to new American images of Khrushchev personally along liking and power dimensions; to his attempts to make attitudes and ideologies consubstantial; and to his use of various rhetorical situations for these functions. If a critic accepts the fundamental premise that each rhetorical act or process is unique, that dimensions interrelate in a way to create a unity never achieved in the past or in the future, then he commits himself to a search for a new way to select, structure, and weigh dimensions for each new act he criticizes.

My hope is that the dimensions described in this essay may provide a framework for theoretical development, practical decision-making, and critical analysis.

30 Warren Weaver has argued that science must "make a third great advance which must be even greater than the nineteenth-century conquest of problems of simplicity or the twentieth-century victory over problems of disorganized complexity. Science must, over the next fifty years, learn to deal with these problems of organized complexity." See "Science and Complexity," in *The Scientist Speaks*, ed. Warren Weaver (New York, 1945), p. 7. Implicit in my essay is the belief that rhetoric represents a problem of "organized complexity."